1: Mi Mi Khaing I-5 (no date) 1960 API Burma
Burmese AP4

CHAPTER THREE

MY mother, as I have said, was the fair young jewel of her father's eye; and my grandfather had flashes of the most radical behaviour. Though he refused to learn English and this irreligious language was never spoken in his house, he suddenly decided to send my mother to learn English, not just as a second language, nor even to spend a few years at a totally English-speaking school—for an accomplishment, as a few other Burmese girls of the time did—but to study seriously until she passed the High School Standard of a European Code school which did all its teaching in English. My mother was thus the first Burmese Buddhist woman to pass the High School Examination in the European Code, and today she can speak faultless English though she never uses it unless necessary, and can even read some of the books of Virginia Woolf, although she does not like them. She and her two young brothers were sent to Moulmein; they stayed at the house of my eldest uncle who had settled there, and my mother attended an American Baptist Mission School. This was just before 1900.

My father, in the meantime, had arrived in Moulmein at the same time as my mother. The world had opened for him suddenly. After the strict and simple life of the monastery he found himself a smart young man with a Western crop and a collared shirt and outer jacket. He carefully put away his mother's ring to be put on again only on his visits back to Ye; he found a big and busy town to range in and no anxious mother waiting at home. I think it was during these years that my father got his love of all the sweet pleasures of life. A non-smoker and a teetotaller, he was one of the most spontaneously happy people. He loved food and many friends, to see young people happy and free from discipline, to spend all his resources in order to create happiness around him; he glorified the ability to think and work quickly and leave the maximum time for eating and laughing.

Particularly in this, Moulmein appealed to him. Having grown up in the monastic system of education by memorizing, he was bewildered at a system which prescribed a whole year of full-day studies for five or six thin text-books. As soon as he could read and understand he committed all his year's text-books to memory within a month, and could not conceive that there was anything else to be learnt unless they prescribed fresh books to be memorized. During school hours he wrote an Arith-

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joking enquiries about whether we were getting enough Buddhist and Burmese teaching for we were attending English Christian schools at the time.

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The monks have lost all touch with the schooling of the great majority of children by now. In the first decade of the century the monastic schools were still the backbone of instruction for boys throughout all the rural districts, being responsible for the high literacy figure of 49% for Burman males, as compared with 11.9% in Madras at the time. But lay schools, either established and run on Burman lines, or established by Christian missionary societies with perhaps grants-in-aid, or under the direct management of Government or a committee acting on behalf of the government, were springing up on all sides, until by 1934 the proportion of lay to recognized monastic schools for vernacular education was about five to one. Although there had been attempts to raise the utilitarian value of monastic education by the encouragement of such subjects as arithmetic, geography and land surveying, it was far easier for the lay schools to conform to the standards set by the Board of Examiners. With the passing of such standards becoming the means of obtaining employment and the changing of fashions, more and more children went to the lay schools. Moreover, the lay schools included schools for girls, either separately or in common with boys.

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In my childhood there were still echoes of the opposition between monastic and secular education. In about 1922 my Uncle Pyant, who was then a serious student at the University, told me the world was round, "but", he added, "the hpongyis say that this is not true and most elder people don't believe it." My husband also tells me that when he went home from his government school with the statement that the earth spun around on its axis and took twenty-four hours to do it, the elders were most scornful. "In that case," they said, "if you were to go up into the air and stay there for some time, you could not come down to Kengtung until the same time the next day, but might land in England for your lunch."

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Another difference between old and new ideas of education was that the elder people were aghast at the long years which a modern education from primary schools to University lasted. They felt that at least one must have learnt everything there was to learn by then, for a few years at a monastery taught a boy all the reading, writing, calculation and literature which any grown man was expected to know. Once my grandfather received a telegram announcing the birth of a grandson; the message contained the additional information that the doctors had found it necessary to perform a circumcision on the infant. The telegram was in English, according to the rules of the Posts and Telegraphs in Burma,

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and Grandfather called my cousin Ko Lu Pe to read it. My cousin had been at a government school for some years and though he could read and write English with some ease, he stuck at the word "circumcise". "What!" exploded Grandfather, "five years learning English, and you can't even read a telegram. This education is quite useless." Whereupon he took the grandchildren and his two young sons out of their schools until his wrath subsided and they quietly started attendance again. It is a popular stage joke also, the B.A. who returns to his village and is asked in good faith by the hpongyi to mend a villager's watch that has gone wrong. The graduate confesses that he cannot mend it. The monk is horrified: "What, passed B.A. and cannot mend a watch?"

So now on my father's birthday the monks ask jokingly and kindly about our school subjects. Their meal is laid out on a low round table, and consists of all the good things my mother can think of, for they have only one main meal in the day. Rice and meat and vegetable dishes are followed by fruit, sweet milky coffee, sweet English cakes. The monastery boys are given their meal outside; the monks, after eating, rise and go, and the boys follow them bearing away the gifts for the monastery. At once there is a general shuffling into more relaxed positions, conversation swells out, we start to scamper around and help to wheel in more round tables. Then everybody eats, and my father feels a deep sense of well-being.

Our lunar calendar has twelve months in its year, beginning the new year about the middle of April with the month of *Tagu*. Each month contains the twenty-nine to thirty days of the moon's cycle, but the dates are numbered with only 15 numbers—15 waxing days starting from the crescent of the new moon: *la-hsan ta-yet, la-hsan hna-yet*, new moon first day, second day and so on, until the 15th and full moon day, *la-pyit nay :* after which come the waning days, *la-hsot*. With this system, we are 12 or 13 days short of the 365 each year, and hence every second year there occurs a double month of *Waso*, in July and August, which month also starts our Lent. Lent lasts the three months of the monsoon, until *Thadingyut*, in October, when we see it out with lights, feasting and much merriment. For the observance of festivals such as New Year and Thadingyut we usually visited relatives, but certain other observances came round each year to us in our own home.

Such is *htamanè-hto*, the making of a comestible known as *htamanè* in vast quantities, for distribution on the first full moon after the harvest. On the full moon night of *Tabodwè* in January-February, the villagers sit up all night in big parties of men and women singing and joking as they make all preparations for the cooking that is to take place by dawn. The basis of htamanè is a glutinous rice called *kaukhnyin*, always

1: Mi Mi Khaing I-5 (no date) 1946 AP1 Burma
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CHAPTER TWELVE

WE lived at Thaton for two years, and then my father became ill and had to be moved to Rangoon for treatment. This meant the packing up of the household, and when my father died shortly afterwards, my mother never went back to live at the great echoing house, but stayed in Rangoon to be near our schools. Thus the long period of our district life came to an end. From now onwards, my mother and sisters were to become merged in the increasing company of *Yan-gon-thu*, Rangoon dwellers, but we saw nothing of this life yet. School walls and student interests at the University enfolded us, and our holidays were spent at Ye and other country places. I was already at the University by this time, after having spent nine years at an English school—nine years during which the alternating periods of school and holidays transported me by turns into two completely different worlds, each kept shut off from the other by childish self-consciousness and reticence. The educational system in Burma did not have a homogeneous structure owing to the different media of instructions in use, and I have always felt that we were the particular victims of this shortcoming. Mistakenly sent to exclusive schools, we were denied the company of a great crowd of Burmeseplay mates during the greater part of these nine years.

Classified according to the language of instruction, there were three types of schools in Burma—the Vernacular, the Anglo-Vernacular and the European. There were over 5,000 recognized vernacular schools in Burma, which contributed towards raising the literacy of the poorest classes, but did little more. The pupils could not hope to continue their studies at the University where the medium of instruction was English, and, although high-school classes were introduced after 1931, they did not qualify a student for any post except that of teaching in such a school. There were few well-paid posts open to those without a knowledge of English.

The great bulk of schools in Burma were Anglo-Vernacular schools, where instruction was carried on in Burmese, but English was taught as a subject; and in the highest classes, some of the text-books used were in English, as the translation of schoolbooks into Burmese was still at an infant stage. My experiences of teaching at the Teachers' Training College, Rangoon, where we had an Anglo-Vernacular school for model

• 871 177. 87 198 teaching and practical training of educational students, were a fair example of the multiple forms of instruction prevailing. I taught in Burmese from a text-book which had not yet been translated into Burmese, as the subject, Home Science, was a new one. I explained the lesson and questioned the pupils in Burmese, but when summing up the points on the blackboard, wrote in English, so that the copying children could more easily correlate the matter with the contents of their English text-books. When answering examinations they were free to write in English or Burmese, and there were many who had a deficient knowledge of English but preferred to write in this language because the text-book had been in English. Among the educational students taking notes, also, there might be included a few Anglo-Burman students who did not know Burmese well. Up to 1935 it was still possible to enter Rangoon University without any knowledge of Burmese, and one grade of the Burmese "lectures" there started with the learning of the alphabet, progressing to the stage of writing sentences by the end of the two-year course. Almost all towns with a population of more than 5,000 inhabitants had a girls' school and a mixed school of the Anglo-Vernacular type —either government or mission or national schools, which later received government aid. The majority of the students at the University was from these Anglo-Vernacular schools.

Finally there were the European Code schools, teaching in English with Burmese as an alternative second language to French or even to Additional English in the high school, until about 1933 when Burmese was made the compulsory second language and the standard of it was also raised to approximate more closely to the Anglo-Vernacular standard.

971 177. 87 198 When my brother and I were first to be sent to school, about 22 years ago, government officials like my father were still under the impression that education in an English school would give a child a great advantage in making his way in Burma. All the examinations for higher government services were conducted in English, and all well-paid posts required a knowledge of English. We were therefore sent to a European Code school, although such schools were started primarily for English-speaking children. Owing to the peculiar social conditions prevailing in the schools at the time, we underwent acute misery during all the years that we were there.

Such schools, both for boys and girls, were set up in the big towns, Rangoon, Mandalay, Moulmein, Maymyo, Toungoo, etc. Most of them were mission or religious schools, aided by the government and by the diocese or a religious mission.

Very few Burmans at that time sent daughters to such schools, though sons were sent commonly enough, and the distinctions made against the stray natives who entered the rolls began from the moment of entry. The diocesan schools insisted on our adopting English Christian and surnames, from an aversion to including heathen names on their registers. Burman Buddhist were thus transformed into orthodox Christian names: Sir Htoon Aung Gyaw and his brothers became a family of Thompsons, Sir Paw Tun was happily converted into Potter, and my brother U Sett Kaing, with less relevance, became Robert Downs. Thus many distinguished Burmans spent years under these assumed names. The Roman Catholic schools were kinder. They merely required us to adopt a system of first name and surname, which does not exist among Burmans, and wished us to pick a Christian first name so that the nuns could pronounce it easily. Thus we got Kathleen Maung, Grace Nee, Sarah Tin Gyi, the daughters of U Maung Maung, U Nee and U Tin Gyi. My own name Mi Mi Khaing was brought into line as Mamie Kaing.

We went to a Roman Catholic convent where the nuns made no attacks on Buddhism and no attempts to proselytise us—despite which I became attracted to their religion for a few years—but with sincere conviction and fervour they condemned everything else in us that was different from the great mass of Anglo-Burmans who filled the school. A good proportion of these children were the children of Englishmen who, not having entered into a legal marriage with the Burmese mothers, had now left mother and child with a sum of money which the kind nuns stretched to cover as much schooling as was possible. These and other Anglo-Burman children were encouraged to swank over us with childish cruelty about our darker skins, flat noses, and uncurling hair. They did this to such an extent that many of us in our minority and our helpless misery, branded our distinguished parents as being "half Burmese and half English", in order to gain their good opinion. We were told that Burmese food was stinking, that the use of oil for the hair was dirty and insanitary, and when young sisters ran after their elder ones calling Ma Ma, Elder Sister, all the children hooted with laughter. No wonder that my sister Mya Mya during her first weeks at school would sit by the gate, evening after evening, singing mournfully:

May May yay-ay
La pa taw
Kyi-gan ta-maw maw.

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Oh mother, mother,
When will you come?
The crow is tired with a-cawing.

But conditions improved with time; we grew older and less imaginative, and above all the tide of Burmese nationalist feeling which surged into being in about 1920 was at last beginning to seep through the convent walls.

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Even the nuns heard, in 1930, about Saya San who raised a rebellion in Tharawaddy district, and roused such fervour among a certain section of the population that about 2,000 rebel followers were killed—their bodies vulnerable to gunfire in spite of the charms they had tattooed on—before the Government succeeded in suppressing the rebellion. Although Saya San was a charlatan to those in authority, and his followers a band of unruly dacoits, his conviction that he was born to become the monarch of a newly resurrected Burmese kingdom fired the imagination of some nationalists. To them he was an intrepid spirit, his courage so keen and his body so hardy: *Kya ko Khalok, thitngok hnin hsu ko thinbyu:* The tiger his stubbing stone, tree stumps and bushes of thorns his smoothest mat. By the time the nuns had heard of Saya San I had another Burmese girl as a fellow boarder and class-mate. Grace Nee was a girl of great spirit and mental liveliness. Her father was also an a-so-ya min, and we derived great comfort and happiness from each other's presence. When the class-teacher scolded one of us, saying, "You Burmans nowadays are expecting us to kow-tow to you. Yes, this mad fellow Saya San. And you think that we must bow to you," then the other would bang desk and chair in sympathy and indignation. Our hearts would swell to bursting point, for though we knew little yet about nationalism or patriotism, we identified our country and our race with the persons of our parents, and we could hardly bear this constant humiliation of their name. We shrank from telling them about it, however. My father never knew how different our life at school was from the world at home, and my mother will learn of it for the first time when she reads this.

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What a glorious new world opened out before us when we went to the University. What splendour there was in the richness of Burmese dress, food, companions, religious celebration, music, dancing and wit. I only regret that I could not take full advantage of these years because family troubles tumbled around my ears just then, and when they had subsided I was forced into earnest study to win the best degree possible in order to comfort my mother. This was necessary because up till this time I had always disappointed my parents because I had preferred popularity among companions to concentration on studies. Rangoon

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
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CHAPTER II

SCHOOL DAYS

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I SUPPOSE Englishmen will never get rid of the notion that monastic schools must needs be dull and dismal, that hours of study only alternate with seasons of austerity and rough punishments. The uninhabited, almost deserted, appearance of the Burmese kyoung; its isolated position; the solemn, restful front which it always preserves, no matter how lightened up by profuse gilding and the carved magnificence of its panels and eaves' boards, or how embowered in rich and waving foliage; the austere aspect and slow-paced gait of the mendicants in their sad yellow robes—all these things inevitably encourage the foreigner in the belief that the monotony and the discipline must crush all life and light-heartedness out of the young scholars.

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Nothing, however, can be farther from the actual fact. No Etonian, no old Rugbeian, can look back with greater delight on triumphs on the river or in the football field, than the grown-up Burman does on his early days at the Pôngyi Kyaung. There are no rough games to remember, it is true, no strivings of any kind with members of another institution. Those things do well enough for a cold-country people. The Burman's reminiscences are of a quieter kind. There was the emulation with the chin lôn, the wicker football, to see who could keep it longest in the air by dexterous use of knee, foot, shoulder, thigh, and cheek. How it relieved the body and freshened the mind after hours of poring over little hand-blackboards, covered with cramped words and letters, in the quiet rooms inside. Then there were the games at gônnyinhto, an elementary combination of skittles

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
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and ninepins, played with the big flat seeds of a jungle creeper. Pleasant they were under the shade of the great mango and pipul trees and the lofty cocoa-nut and palmyra palms, and exciting were the games, so that the customary stillness of the place was rudely broken upon by disputing voices, till a monk would come out and bring all back to work again as a penance. Then during the work there was the fun of the writing hour, when everybody had to write out maxims and prayers on his little parabaik with a clumsy pointed steatite pencil. There were always some stiff-fingered big pupils who could not manage to write their copy neatly or correctly, and as punishment had to take the good writers on their backs and march ruefully up and down the long schoolroom during pleasure. Sometimes they were thrashed, but the other punishment was the more dreaded. Then there was the schoolmaster monk, who would tell fairy stories of the other three great islands which lie in the sea round about Myinmo mountain; of the half-moon-faced western islanders, and the wondrous tree that bore everything eatable one could wish for and delivered it ready cooked; the joys of the six heavens of the Nats and the grisly horrors of Nga-yè, with its fearful ages of fantastic punishments. Every now and again travelling necromancers and hmaw sayās would spend a night or two at the monastery, and in recompense for the little delicacies and odds and ends of food which good-natured neophytes would get for them, used to tell stories of witchery and marvel. Sometimes there would be a sā-haw ā, a kind of cyclic poet, who knew half the zats in the language by heart, and would recite a little just for practice. Or a tattooing sayā would come round and mark some particularly favoured youth with a quaint figure. Discussion as to its meaning and probable virtues would be carried on in the shadowy evenings for months afterwards. Varieties of this kind recur to the old Burman as he thinks of the school days long ago, and he sighs with as much conviction as any European that there are no days s happy as the school days.

English rule has disturbed old customs a good deal in the province, but even now we may say that, as an invari-

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
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able rule, when a boy has reached the age of eight or nine years he goes as a matter of course to the Pôngyi Kyaung. It is open to all alike—to the poor fisherman's son as well as to the scion of princely blood—for no one pays anything, and it is not carefully considered who it is that fills the monkish begging pots in the daily round. Thus every Buddhist boy in the country is taught to read and write, and in this respect at least there are but very few illiterate Burmans. This primary education must by no means be confounded with entry into the monastery as a koyin-gale, or novice. Strictly speaking, this ceremony ought not to take place before the age of fifteen, and the earlier sojourn is only a preparation for it. The younger pupils may become boarders in the monastic building if they choose, but they do not assume the yellow robe, which marks them, for however short a time it may be worn, as members of the Assembly of the Perfect. They wear their ordinary clothes and retain their secular name.

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As soon as the boy enters the monastery he is set down in the big schoolroom beside all the other boys, and receives a roughly-made black wooden slate. On this are written a few of the letters, perhaps the whole of the alphabet. A little explanation starts him off, and for the next few days he is engaged in shouting out their sounds at the top of his voice. Nobody minds him, for all the other scholars are similarly engaged in hallooing, and the monks derive a sense of comfort and a virtuous consciousness of doing good from the noise. It is as soothing as the sound of his mill-wheels to the miller, or the roar of traffic to the cockney. If a boy stops shouting, it is a sign that he has stopped working—and if he is not meditating mischief, it is probable that he is about to go to sleep, and he is corrected accordingly. The method is an admirable one for keeping the boys occupied—much more so than civilised Western methods—though I fear a council of English head-masters would scout the idea. The casual foreign observer who goes about taking notes, like Grose or the "Rampant M.P.," passes the ecclesiastical school, and in amazement at the seeming uproar within, declares that monastery schools are hopelessly badly conducted, and without the semblance of discipline. As a

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All the ill deeds 872 779 792 775 186

he does will swell the sum of his demerits, but not a single good action, no uttermost act of charity or devotion, will be recorded to his advantage for another existence. Without admission to the order, without "Buddhist baptism," no man can count his present existence as other than an animal's. The great gift of having appeared in the likeness of a human being; the happy balancing of merits and demerits which has resulted in so glorious an opportunity of advancing towards Ne'-ban; the still greater fortune of existence in a country where the tenets of Buddhism offer supreme chances to the weary seeker after rest from the moil of a work-a-day world; all will have been recklessly thrown away. It is written that more hardly will a needle cast from the summit of Mount Myinmo across the wide Thamoddaya Sea, more hardly will it touch with its point as it falls another needle standing point upwards in the great Southern Island, than will any given creature become a human being. How are the Western foreigners, black and white, to be pitied, who have indeed by earnest strivings attained the seat of man, but, arrived there, find it all naught because they do not hear the teachings of the Buddha! How much worse the Burman, to whom all his life long the monastery door stands open, to whom a week's, a day's, an hour's sojourn would offer boundless possibilities, and yet who enters not in. If this be so, what then can be the prospect for the boy who having put his hand to the plough turns back, who entering the monastery as a child, imbibes the religious thoughts and becomes acquainted with the religious creed, and yet fails to seek the "humanity" so easily to be gained? Better have been born an animal or an Englishman, and scoffed at what he did not understand.

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Consequently it may be invariably assumed that the little scholar, as soon as age and acquirements admit, puts on the yellow garb as a finish to his education. This used to include every one. Till the English came and took the country, everybody went to the Pon-gyi-Kyaung. But now there are English government schools; there are Burmese laymen's schools, which neglect religious education altogether, and look to competitive examinations as the end and aim of juvenile existence, as the ne'-ban of school life.

2:Scott G-5 (1870's-1909)1910 AP1 Burma
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792 561 remain only twenty-four hours in the yellow dress, long enough to enable them to go once at least round the village begging from door to door in the train of the yahans. This, naturally, is very little better than leaving the kyaung immediately. It is considered hardly decent for the shin to leave under seven days of professed membership of the community. Some stay longer—a fortnight, a month, or two months; but all the more earnest believers insist that their sons shall remain at least one Wā, throughout the four months of Lent, in the rainy season. The best course for a fervent Buddhist, who nevertheless does not feel himself adapted for a monkish life, is to stay over three Wās, one Lent for his father, one for his mother, and one for himself. It is on account of the importance of the Wā to the shin-pyu that most inductions take place at the beginning of that season. Yahans count their seniority by the number of Lents they have spent in the kyaung. A mendicant of twenty Wās must shekho to one of twenty-five, and so on. An individual who has left the holy community to re-enter the world is called a lu-twet, a runaway. On the other hand, a man who has been married, and has afterwards entered the monastery, goes by the name of taw-twet, one who has fled from the jungle of the world. The most revered yahans are those who have held steadfastly by the blameless, austere life of the fraternity since the time when they were first admitted as koyin-gale. Such are called ngè-byu, white, or stainless from youth, and if they attain to advanced age are always sure of a most splendid ceremonial funeral, whether they have been celebrated for piety and learning or not.

792 871 If the shin-pyu stays on in the kyaung, he continues the same course of studies as he began as a scholar. If he has not already learnt the Payeit Gyi and the Paya Shikho, Pali sermons and forms of worship, or the Mingala Thut, the "Buddhist Beatitudes," he applies himself to them now. The most advanced pore over the metaphysical mysteries of the Abidhamma Konit-gyan, the seven books of the most difficult part of the Bitaghat. These, with the Thingyo and Thadda, afford ample room for consideration to the longest life. The modern system of shortened sojourn in the

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kyaungs has led to very imperfect and limited knowledge of these treasuries of sacred knowledge. Formerly it used to be said that the man who did not know the Thadda, the Pali "grammar," knew nothing. If this position were insisted on now, the number of ignorant people in Lower Burma would be somewhat startling.

But there are many difficulties before you get to the Abidhamma and its cognate subjects. Even in the Payeit Gyi there is a section called Ta-zet, or Ta-zet-thut, which has the credit of sending many a probationer back to the noisy, sinful world. According to the couplet—

Shin pyet ta-zet,
Loo pyet a-yet.

Brandy sends a man to hell;
Ta-zet spoils the saint as well.

It is a sort of religious *Pons Asinorum.*

Besides prosecuting his religious studies, the shin is required also to attend on the pon-gyis and minister to their wants. He must lay before them at fixed times their daily food, the proper supply of water, the well-used betel-box, and whatever else the monk may require. He must of course go round every morning with the other members of the monastery, the begging-bowl strapped round his neck, accepting meekly, without word of thanks, or glance thrown to the right or left, even when he passes his father's house, the food poured in by the pious. When a pon-gyi goes abroad the neophyte may be required to follow, carrying his fan or umbrella, or perhaps an arm-load of palm-leaf books, if a function is to be performed anywhere. According to the strict letter of the law the ko-yin ought to eat only of the food presented in the morning, but a very great laxity has crept in in this respect, not only with the neophytes, but even among the professed members of the order. It is no uncommon thing for the parents of the youth to send in daily a special meal for him, or even, in the case of wealthy families, actually to keep a cook on the monastic premises to prepare his food. Such sybaritism is not by any means uncommon in Lower Burma, though even there hardly approved of. In any good monastery in Upper Burma, or

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a monk is liable to commit. The ninth refers to the common Oriental dislike to any person of insufficient dignity occupying an elevated place physically above worthier people.

So far, then, the shin is not very grievously burdened in the monastery. But the discipline maintained is very strict. None of the ko-yins or of the boarder-pupils must be out of the monastic limits after the bell has rung. A lay scholar may get permission from the kyaung po-go to sleep at home now and again, but this indulgence is naturally impossible to the neophyte; he must always stay in the monastery. Again, the boarders may run home in the afternoon to get some dinner at their parents' houses, but this the shin cannot do. Breaches of the rules are very severely punished. The culprit's hands are tied high above his head to a post, and the castigator lays on vigorously on the naked back with a stout bamboo. Cases of deliberate cruelty of course occasionally happen, for human nature is the same everywhere, and a Dotheboys Hall is not an entire figment; but they are rare, and on the whole the shin is happy in the monastery, and occasionally in later life looks back with regret to the old, quiet, unruffled, careless life of the pon-gyi kyaung.

In Upper Burma it has actually been his school, for but very few adopt the system of having private teachers to instruct their children; and in Lower Burma it probably contrasts favourably with the uncomfortable hard benches and desks of the English institution, and the still more irksome quietness demanded, and steady, prolonged application exacted by the English teacher. Those who have been to both remember most fondly the long dusky monastery schoolroom, where they sat on the floor and shouted out their lessons, and now and again slipped out into the air to take the stiffness out of their limbs with a quarter of an hour at chin lôn, Burmese football. In the English school you learned to make money; in the Burmese school you learned to be happy and contented.

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fully observed, in accordance with the precise instructions laid down in the Wini. When a monk wants anything he must not go and get it for himself, nor direct any one in as many words to bring it to him. He must say to an attendant shin, or scholar, "Do what is lawful," whereupon the food is brought him, and the shin kneels down at a distance of a couple of feet, and, making the customary salutation, says, "This is lawful." The yahan then either takes it from his hand or directs him to place it within reach. The same ceremony is observed in everything, whether the religious wants water to wash his face or hands or to rinse out his mouth, or his sandals and fan when he goes out, or when offerings are made to him by the pious. The desire is of course to impart dignity to all the monk does, and to repress covetousness and inordinate carnal desires, and the custom dates from the very foundation of the order.

After the noontide meal all return to work again. A certain number undertake the teaching of the boys, who are at all stages of learning, from the children at the Thin-bôn-gyi, the spelling-book, up to the Ko-yins, who, in accordance with the law, are learning the Wini, the Whole Duty of the Monk, by heart, with a view to abandoning the world and adopting the religious life. Others set to work to read old texts and the commentaries on them, or go to superintend the professional writers who are copying out manuscripts, carefully scratching on the palm-leaves with sharp steel style. The pyin-sin themselves never do anything of the kind. The writers are all professionals, laymen, and almost without exception from Upper Burma. The sādaik, the carved and gilded box containing the palm-leaf books, stands in the central room near the images, and often shaded by a sacred umbrella. When a learned sadaw makes notes, or writes a commentary of his own, he dictates it all to these copyists, who afterwards engross it. Most of the older members of the kyaung do, however, what an Englishman would call nothing, all the afternoon. They talk with whatever idlers—and there are always an abundance of them—come about the place, and then sink into meditation and many of the weaker of them into sleep. Meditation is the only path to the higher seats whereby a

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have experienced the impressiveness of this ceremonial, called the Thā-thanā-hlyauk, will readily forget the powerful effect it has on the feelings. It is the fit ending of a day full of great possibilities for all. If the same routine gone through day after day becomes monotonous and loses some of its power for good, yet the effect of such a school, presided over by an abbot of intelligence and earnestness, must infallibly work for the good of all connected with it, and, especially so in the case of an impulsive, impressionable people like the Burmese. As long as all the men of the country pass through the kyaungs, the teachings of Western missionaries can have but little power to shake the power of Buddhism over the people. The moral truths of both religions, Christianity and Buddhism, are practically the same, and who can give proof of aught else without calling in the aid of faith? The Burman is convinced that no other creed will suit him so well, and the number of monasteries in all parts of the country renders it easy for every one to obtain entrance for his children. The king sent his sons to the kyaung, and the poorest and most sinful wretch need not fear that his child will be turned away from the gates. Teaching is really all the pyin-sin do for the people; but it is precisely this moderate amount of teaching, revealing as it does to all the stern simplicity of the monastic life, that keeps the faith active in the country. Many monks are supremely lazy, but so are many of their fellow-countrymen, and if you are bidden by the Law to meditate deeply on the nature of mind and matter, of Nām and Rupa, of Seit and Sedathit, of Thissa and Zan, it is certain that you cannot be actively employed on other less important matters.

Of late years the rudiments of Western knowledge, arithmetic, elementary geography, and history are more and more taught in the monasteries all over the country, and Government gives grants to the monasteries for the pupils who pass the prescribed examinations.

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As yet they have not begun to demand an equal share 562 871

of education with the boys, and the only accomplishments most Burmese girls know are how to dress neatly, do up their hair, and powder their faces. This is the single open implication of their inferiority—except in worship at the pagoda, when every woman will pray that in another existence she may be a man—and it is not likely that female education will make much progress for another generation, the popular idea in Burma being that learning is no use to a girl when she has it, and she may, consequently, as well devote all her spare time to making herself look as pretty as possible. Here and there are a few who are deeply learned in Burmese literature. The young wife of one of the most prominent living Burman pleaders in Rangoon has as good a knowledge of the sacred books and as great a fluency in repeating Pali rituals as any pôngyi in the country. But the great majority of girls only know what they pick up from the conversation of their brothers and the men who come about the house. It is therefore greatly to their credit that they manage not only house affairs, but their husband's business into the bargain. A farmer's wife will carry out the sale of the whole rice crop to the agent of an English rice firm in her husband's absence, and generally strikes a better bargain than he would have made himself. If the village head constable is away, the wife will get together the policemen, stop a fight, arrest the offenders, and send them off to the lock-up all on her own responsibility. The wife sits by, no matter what public business is being transacted, and very often puts in her own opinion quite as a matter of course; in fact, she is virtual master of the house, and henpecked husbands are not by any means uncommon. The last king of Burma, Thibaw Min, was a notable instance. There never was a king of Burma before who remained for three years the husband of one wife. It was not inclination in his case. He had quite a number of *amourettes*; but the sturdy Supayā Lat and her formidable mother soon got the offending damsels out of the way. There is also little doubt that it was Supayā Lat and her mother who suggested the massacre of the Princes and prompted the defiance of the British Government, which brought about the ending of the Burmese monarchy.

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[1] [i.e., girls--ANALYST]

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CHAPTER LVIII

MANDALAY AND RANGOON

[This chapter describes these towns as they were in 1881.]

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AMERICANS talk, and with good reason, of the magic growth of their cities. But for mere mushroom growth, Mandalay might compare even with Chicago itself, and if we are to judge of the progress of a commercial place by the fair criterion of business results, Rangoon may hold up its head in confident rivalry with any of the typical American cities. In the middle of last century the site of Mandalay was swampy paddy land and rank jungle. Now an area of five square miles is covered with houses, many of them squalid enough certainly, and with large patches of unused land round about them, but none the less contained within the city limits. Rangoon came into British hands in 1852, and at that time possessed no commerce worthy of the name, indeed it was only known as the place for pilgrims to the Shwe Dagôn pagoda to stay at, and the residence of the Regent of Pegu, as being the guard station on the most accessible mouth of the Irrawaddy. Ten years later, ships entered or cleared from the port having a tonnage of 295,000 tons, and the imports were worth £1,200,000, the exports £1,400,000, and since that date—a year or two after Mandalay had been founded—the tonnage has increased to 1,000,000, the value of the imports to £5,000,000 sterling, and the exports to £4,000,000. In a quarter of a century the commerce of British Burma rose to nearly £20,000,000 sterling. The population has quadrupled; public works are carried on; education is widely disseminated; the administration is carefully managed by British officials; a railway,

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14: Brant E-5 (1949-50) 1954 AP1 Burma
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large amounts of food. The married women prepare food, serve, and entertain the guests, while the unmarried girls assist them. If a ceremony involves a procession, the unmarried girls bear the gifts which are invariably taken to the monks on such occasions.

These 'groups' are so informal and loosely organized that in the strict sociological sense they should not be so designated; rather, they are simply the conventional lines along which cooperation takes place and labor is divided, in a spirit of mutual aid, whenever a family sponsors a ceremony -- an occasion involving much work. Each is willing to help, for when his own family sponsors an event, similar assistance will be expected and forthcoming.

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Education. In addition to the Buddhist monastic schools, to be discussed in the next chapter, there is a small secular school in the village. This is operated on a voluntary basis by a middle-aged schoolmaster, a widower, who migrated, together with his daughter, to Tadagale two years ago. It is his hope that eventually the school will be incorporated into the regular school system, as compulsory education is gradually extended to the country. The school is financed wholly by voluntary contributions. The village headman personally contributes ten rupees per month, his brother gives a like amount, and the Bus Union donates five rupees. From this income of twenty-five rupees per month ($5.25) the schoolmaster pays five rupees for his house rent and provides blackboard chalk and his own books and pencils. On what remains, plus a little profit he derives from maintaining a small shop in his house, he must support his daughter and himself. But he is confident that once compulsory education is extended to Tadagale, his sacrificial efforts of the present will be rewarded by a regular appointment at Rs. 100 per month, an expanded program of instruction, and perhaps the services of an assistant. For the present he operates the school without any responsibilities to superiors, devising his own curriculum and teaching according to his own methods. The schoolmaster was himself once a student at a normal school in Moulmein.

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About eighty children attend the school with varying degrees of regularity. The average daily attendance is about sixty. The schoolmaster feels that many more children of school-age living in the community should attend, but finds that parents are reluctant to send their children. Some feel they are needed for household and field labor; others prefer what they regard as the stricter environment of the monastic school, with its great emphasis upon religion and correct conduct. The schoolmaster deplores the ignorance and negative attitudes of villagers concerning education, and their unwillingness to contribute financially to the maintenance of his school.

Instruction is given in five grades or 'standards' as they are called in Burma. These are termed 1B, 1A, 2, 3, and 4.

Standard 1B is equivalent to the kindergarten of the pre-World War II schools. The schoolmaster has divided the class into two sections, one for the children of seven to eight years who already can read to some extent, the other for the younger ones of four to six who cannot. According to the rules of the government schools six years is the minimum school age, but the schoolmaster in Tadagale is not bound by such regulations. He teaches these two groups of kindergarteners according to their own levels and at the pace which he thinks appropriate. They learn the alphabet and simple numbers at first, later moving on to reading and spelling. No regular allocation of time to different subjects is possible, since the schoolmaster must teach this and four other classes without any assistance.

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IV

RELIGION

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The people of Tadagale are overwhelmingly Theravada Buddhist in faith. The exceptions are the Indian minority, who are largely Hindus. There are three Indians who profess Mohammedanism, and three Indo-Burmans and one Pakistani of like faith. Being Burmese and Buddhist are almost identified in the thinking of the majority, as evidenced by the fact that almost all replied 'Burmese Buddhist' to the question, 'To what people do you consider yourself to belong?'

In discussing the religious life of Tadagale, realism calls for emphasis upon actual religious beliefs and behavior, rather than any extended setting down of the formal theology of Buddhism. The latter has been done in any number of specialized works, to which the interested reader may refer. Here we shall refer to Buddhist precepts insofar as is necessary to illuminate religious beliefs and practices of the villagers.

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The Five Precepts or Commandments. Almost all villagers know well the fundamental Buddhist injunctions against the taking of life in any form, the consumption of alcohol, illicit sexual activity, theft, and prevarication. These moral rules are, of course, sometimes breached. In Tadagale, the use of alcohol, sometimes to excess, is perhaps the most notable instance. The 'good Buddhist' does not, however, seem to experience feelings of guilt or pangs of conscience in such matters. Rather, the following of the moral precepts has instrumental value for him, in relation to his accumulation of merit and his reincarnation after death.

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Merit. One's behavior throughout life determines one's store of merit, and this, in turn, determines one's reincarnation after death. Morally proper behavior, such as the following of the five basic commandments of Buddhist faith, is regarded as contributing to one's store of merit and thus enhancing one's state of reincarnation after death. Religious acts, such as making daily offerings of food to the monks, saying prayers, and attending the pagoda festivals on the important sacred days are likewise considered to increase one's merit. Breaking the moral precepts, irreligiousity, acting selfish or quarrelsome, detract from merit and accordingly tend to lower one's state in reincarnation.

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Such is about the extent of the average villager's lay conception and understanding of the moral code and the ideas of the afterlife in Buddhism. He has little or no knowledge of the detailed concepts of reincarnation, with its elaborate gradationary ladder leading from the four states of punishment up to the ultimate achievement of Nirvana. Such theological learning is the property of the monkhood and of a few laymen who spent more than the usual few years as pupils in the monastic school.

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Functions of the Monks. The functions of the Buddhist monks in the village may be conveniently classified as three-fold: formal education; officiation at certain rites; and providing personal advice and guidance to individuals.

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With respect to formal education, the monks of four monasteries close to the village conduct schools which are attended by a considerable number of

792 the small boys, as day pupils. Monastic education is a traditional part of
● 871 Burmese Buddhism, and almost all the men of Tadagale, whether reared in the village or elsewhere, have attended monastic schools for varying lengths of time.

792 The monastic school curriculum includes elementary reading, writing and
872 arithmetic, rudiments of history and geography, heavily colored by Burmese
876 cosmology and folklore, and instruction in Buddhist precepts and proper conduct. There is heavy emphasis upon proper conduct. Instruction takes the form of mass recitation and rote memorization. Discipline is strict and the inattentive pupil is kept alert, when necessary, by means of the rod. As indicated earlier, many parents in the village favor the monastic as against the public school because of the strict discipline and the emphasis upon conduct and religion.

793 Concerning the second function of the monks, officiation at certain rites, it should be indicated that because Burmese Buddhism is not a congregational type of religion, the monks are not called upon to officiate at regular assemblies in any fashion akin to the role of the Christian minister. The monks do, however, play an important part in the initiation of boys into the monkhood; and sometimes take part in funeral rites.

The monk's function of giving advice and guidance stems from the fact that he is regarded, in the thinking of the villagers, not only as one to whom the greatest respect and deference is due by virtue of his dedication to his life to religion, but also as a living repository of wisdom and universal knowledge. He is a person to whom one may turn in time of uncertainty, doubt or stress for personal counsel. Problems relating to the conduct of one's children; concern over persistent lack of success in one's economic activities; or even matters of health may be taken to the monk. A great deal of the advice rendered by monks is formulaic, folkloristic and magical in nature. Particular monks tend to acquire reputations as being especially wise and helpful in particular kinds of problems.

792 Support of the Monks. The monastery buildings and the land on which
235 they stand are the property of the monastic order, held in perpetuity by grant of the government, free of taxation.

The monks are supported by the donations of the villagers. Every morning a monk, accompanied by one or two monastic school pupils, passes through the village to collect offerings of food. As he enters the compound of each home a member of the household takes a pot of cooked rice, which has been prepared for the morning meal, and places a few large spoonsful in the monk's begging bowl. This minimum daily contribution of food is made by
[624] every Buddhist household, without exception; in addition, many families send bowls of curry and rice to the monastery. Giving food to the monks is an important act of merit to Burmese Buddhists. It is regarded as unthinkable that any household would refuse. When the hypothetical case was posed of such a deviant household, villagers agreed that such a family would be severely criticized and shunned in the village.

The few other things that the monks require for their austere existence are given by villagers on the important ceremonial days of the year. These items include robes, soap, matches, begging bowls, water strainers and needles.

796 Duty Days. The Burmese calendar is a lunar one, and in each month there are four days -- duty or sabbath days -- on which the villagers go to the monastery

16:Fielding Hall G-3 (1885-1890) 1898 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

CHAPTER XI

THE MONKHOOD—II

'The restrained in hand, restrained in foot, restrained in speech, of the greatest self-control. He whose delight is inward, who is tranquil and happy when alone—him they call "mendicant."'—*Acceptance into the Monkhood.*

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BESIDES being the ideal of the Buddhists, the monk is more: he is the schoolmaster of all the boys. It must be remembered that this is a thing aside from his monkhood. A monk need not necessarily teach; the aim and object of the monkhood is, as I have written in the last chapter, purity and abstraction from the world. If the monk acts as schoolmaster, that is a thing apart. And yet all monasteries are schools. The word in Burmese is the same; they are identified in popular speech and in popular opinion. All the monasteries are full of scholars, all the monks teach. I suppose much the same reasons have had influence here as in other nations: the desire of the parents that their children should learn religion in their childhood, the fact that the wisest and most honoured men entered the monkhood, the leisure of the monks giving them opportunity for such occupation.

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16:Fielding Hall G-3 (1885-1890) 1898 AP1 Burma
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Every man all through Burma has gone to a monastery school as a lad, has lived there with the monks, has learnt from them the elements of education and a knowledge of his faith. <It is an exception to find a Burman who cannot read and write.> Sometimes from lack of practice the art is lost in later manhood, but it has always been acquired. The education is not very deep—reading Burmese and writing; simple, very simple, arithmetic; a knowledge of the days and months, and a little geography, perhaps, and history—that is all. But of their religion they learn a great deal. They have to get by heart great portions of the sacred books, stories and teachings, and they have to learn many prayers. They have to recite them, too, as those who have lived much near monasteries know. Several times a day, at about nine o'clock at night, and again before dawn, you will hear the lads intoning clearly and loudly some of the sacred teachings. I have been awakened many a time in the early morning, before the dawn, before even the promise of the dawn in the eastern sky, by the children's voices intoning. And I have put aside my curtain and looked out from my rest-house and seen them in the dim starlight kneeling before the pagoda, the tomb of the great teacher, saying his laws. The light comes rapidly in this country: the sky reddens, the stars die quickly overhead, the first long beams of sunrise are trembling on the dewy bamboo feathers ere they have finished. It is one of the most beautiful sights imaginable to see monks and children kneeling on the bare ground, singing while the dawn comes.

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The education in their religion is very good, very thorough, not only in precept, but in practice; for in the monastery you must live a holy life, as the monks live, even if you are but a schoolboy.

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But the secular education is limited. It is up to the standard of education amongst the people at large, but that is saying little. Beyond reading and writing and arithmetic it does not go. I have seen the little boys do arithmetic. They were adding sums, and they began, not as we would, on the right, but on the left. They added, say, the hundreds first; then they wrote on the slate the number of hundreds, and added up the tens. If it happened that the tens mounted up so as to add one or more to the hundreds, a little grimy finger would wipe out the hundreds already written and write in the correct numbers. It follows that if the units on being added up came to over ten, the tens must be corrected with the little grimy finger, first put in the mouth. Perhaps both tens and hundreds had to be written again. It will be seen that when you come to thousands and tens of thousands, a good deal of wiping out and re-writing may be required. A Burman is very bad at arithmetic; a villager will often write 133 as 100,303; he would almost as soon write 43 as 34; both figures are in each number, you see.

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I never met a Burman who had any idea of cubic measurement, though land measurement they pick up very quickly.

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I have said that the education in the monasteries is up to the average education of the people. That is so now. Whether when civilization progresses

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and more education is required the monasteries will be able to provide it, is another thing.

The education given now is mostly a means to an end: to learning the precepts of religion. Whether the monks will provide an education beyond such a want, I doubt. You see, a monk is by his vows, by the whole tenour of his life, apart from the world; too keen a search after knowledge, any kind of secular knowledge, would be a return to the things of this life, would, perhaps, re-kindle in him the desires that the whole meaning of his life is to annihilate. 'And after thou hast run over all things, what will it profit thee if thou hast neglected thyself?'

Besides, no knowledge, except mere theoretical knowledge, can be acquired without going about in the world. You cannot cut yourself off from the world and get knowledge of it. Yet the monk is apart from the world. It is true that Buddhism has no antagonism to science—nay, has every sympathy with, every attraction to, science. Buddhism will never try and block the progress of the truth, of light, secular or religious; but whether the monks will find it within their vows to provide that science, only time can prove. However it may be, it will not make any difference to the estimation in which the monks are held. They are not honoured for their wisdom—they often have but little; nor for their learning—they often have none at all; nor for their industry—they are never industrious; but because they are men trying to live—nay, succeeding in living—a life void of sin. Up till now the education given by the monks has met the wants

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of the people; in future it will do so less and less. But a community that has lived through twenty centuries of change, and is now of the strength and vitality that the Buddhist monkhood is, can have nothing to fear from any such change. Schoolmasters, except religious and elementary, they may cease to be, perhaps; the pattern and ensample of purity and righteousness they will always remain.

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562 her; and as her surroundings change, so will she. What she was a thousand years ago I do not care, what she may be a thousand years hence I do not know; it is of what she is to-day that I have tried to know and write.

858 Children in Burma have, I think, a very good
562 time when they are young. Parentage in Burma
871 has never degenerated into a sort of slavery. It has never been supposed that gaiety and goodness are opposed. And so they grow up little merry naked things, sprawling in the dust of the gardens, sleeping in the sun with their arms round the village
[854] dogs, very sedate, very humorous, very rarely crying. Boys and girls when they are babies grow up together, but with the schooldays comes a division. All the boys go to school at the monastery without the walls, and there learn in noisy fashion their arithmetic, letters, and other useful knowledge. But little girls have nowhere to go. They cannot go to the monasteries, these are for boys alone, and the nunneries are very scarce. For twenty monasteries there is not one nunnery. Women do not seem to care to learn to become nuns as men do to become monks. Why this is so I cannot tell, but there is no doubt of the fact. And so there are no schools for girls as there are for boys, and consequently the girls
[369] are not well educated as a rule. In great towns there are, of course, regular schools for girls, generally for girls and boys together; but in the villages
562 these very seldom exist. The girls may learn from
212 their mothers how to read and write, but most of
871 them cannot do so. It is an exception in country places to find a girl who can read, as it is to find

16:Fielding Hall G-3 (1885-1890) 1898 AP1 Burma
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a boy who cannot. If there were more nunneries, there would be more education among the women; here is cause and effect. But there are not, so the little girls work instead. While their brothers are in the monasteries, the girls are learning to weave and herd cattle, drawing water, and collecting firewood. They begin very young at this work, but it is very light; they are never overworked, and so it does them no harm usually, but good.

The daughters of better-class people, such as merchants, and clerks, and advocates, do not, of course, work at field labour. They usually learn to read and write at home, and they weave, and many will draw water. For to draw water is to go to the well, and the well is the great meeting-place of the village. As they fill their jars they lean over the curb and talk, and it is here that is told the latest news, the latest flirtation, the little scandal of the place. Very few men or boys come for water; carrying is not their duty, and there is a proper place for flirtation. So the girls have the well almost to themselves.

Almost every girl can weave. In many houses there are looms where the girls weave their dresses and those of their parents; and many girls have stalls in the bazaar. Of this I will speak later. Other duties are the husking of rice and the making of cheroots. Of course, in richer households there will be servants to do all this; but even in them the daughter will frequently weave either for herself or her parents. Almost every girl will do something, if only to pass the time.

They have no accomplishments. They do not

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Q. "We want to know your relations with adherents of other religions. There are people who worship Indian gods, Chinese gods, and Christians - what is your attitude towards them?"

A. (U.M.) "I don't hold any attitude at all."

Q. " Do you get on well?"

A. (U.M.) "Yes. We get on very well. They buy our goods and we buy theirs. They rent our fields and cultivate them. If there are cows they are borrowed and lent. We live together like this - buying and selling."

Q. "This is about the people. How about their attitude towards their gods?"

A. "I have no attitude."

Q. "Have you never thought about it?"

A. "I have never thought about it. Their god is only slightly different. There is only one god. There will be only one god. Only people differ somewhat. Our outlook should be improved. After all, his god is my god and my god is his god. Only the races differ. Even one race is divided within itself."

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The relationship of the family to the state in Pathwe involve taxes, military service and voting. In the pre-war days, U Myaing and family had to pay a capitation tax, levied at the rate of Rs. 5/- per year for a married couple, and Rs. 2/8 per year for a bachelor of twenty and over. Children and unmarried women and widows are exempt from any tax whatsoever. There was a land tax on cultivation fields - levied at the rate of annas 2 per acre per annum, and also on garden land at one anna or two annas per acre per annum according to the value of the land. The tax on INS - or purchase of the fishery rights amounted to a figure anywhere between Rs. 3000/- and Rs. 12,000/-. U Myaing is not liable to taxes because of his low income, he retains his voting privileges for general elections.

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The family was moved from Pathwe to the refugee camp because of the insurrection and has been under the protection of the government since coming to camp. The proportion of food and shelter benefits, which they receive from the government, has been noted under those headings. According to government policy, shelter is provided for the family, and food for all except one adult who is expected to work.

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Education for U Myaing's children is provided by the government both in Pantanaw and in the refugee camp. Only the cost of the books has to be paid by him.

Children in the Pathwe village learnt their lessons at the government school. This school, which was on YWA-GYI-BET side, teaches pupils up to the tenth standard. The school house was built by contributions taken in the village. When U Myaing was young, they had to pay a tuition fee of four annas each to the schoolmaster every month. Now government has taken over the cost of educating the children, and fees are no longer required of them. The children only have to bring their own books and pencils. There are three teachers in the school; one headmaster and two assistants. The headmaster draws a salary of Rs. 100/- and the assistants of over Rs. 90/- each. There are other schools across the river but they teach only up till the fourth standard, and children of higher grades have to come to YWA-GYI-BET to attend school.

21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

of the interlude were religious feast days, and out of respect for those occasions, the story had to be religious. Moreover, the interlude had to contend with the *Hawsa* or dramatic recitation by one person of a story, which was a rival in popularity; and all *Hawsas* were based on religious stories. However, the most important reason why the interlude had to depend again on the *Jatakas* for its stories was the great popularity of the works of U Awbatha.

Shin U Awbatha was a monk who lived during the reigns of Bodawpaya (1782–1819) and Bagyidaw (1819–37). He was a product of the age of learning. Famed for his piety, religious learning, and knowledge of Sanskrit and Pali, he chose, like his contemporaries, to write in Burmese, and he enriched Burmese prose. The prose before him had been much neglected. The scholars were more interested in verse. When they did write prose, they never succeeded in forgetting that they were essentially verse-writers, and they used rhymed, balanced, and measured phrases. They used too rich an imagery. They broke into verse when they wanted to express any intensity of feeling. Often they introduced Pali words into their writings when there were more suitable Burmese ones. Burmese prose before U Awbatha was in the same position as English prose before Dryden. U Awbatha introduced a prose which was expressive and clear, simple yet effective. It was used to convey varieties of feelings and emotions, but it was always kept restrained and was never allowed to lose its clearness. His works are still well known and popular. The importance of U Awbatha to Burmese language and literature can be judged from the fact that from the junior forms to the Honours course in Burmese at Rangoon University, his books are textbooks.[1]

There are hundreds of Birth Stories, but the most important are the *Ten Big Jatakas*. They are much longer than the rest. U Awbatha wrote Burmese prose versions of the eight longest of those. He followed closely the Pali originals as far as the incidents of the stories were concerned, but he portrayed character in detail, and made the characters more lifelike and therefore more interesting. The story was very well retold, but he was equally masterful in the portrayal of character and in his understanding of human psychology.

He wrote his first *Jataka* in 1785 when Burmese arms were flashing victorious in Assam and Manipur, but vainglorious references to contemporary events found no place in his works. In the peaceful

[1] A short account of U Awbatha is given in G. E. Harvey, op. cit., p. 269.

21: Htin Aung E-5 (ca. 1930) 1937 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

could not and did not achieve success, even though the translator was the learned scholar and journalist, U Shwe Kyu.[1] The translations went unnoticed, and as the magazine became defunct in 1913, the precious issues which contain them are now available only in some libraries. After this failure to introduce Shakespeare into the vernacular, no further attempt was made, and Burmese is one of the very few civilized languages into which the plays of the great dramatist have not been successfully translated.

In 1919, after the Great War, a wave of national aspiration swept over Asia, and Burma was affected by it. With the resulting revival of interest in Burmese institutions, the study of U Kyin U and U Pon Nya has become again popular, not only in schools and colleges, but all over the country. In schools following the established educational practice of prescribing Shakespeare's plays as textbooks, the plays of U Kyin U and U Pon Nya are now so prescribed. The newly established Rangoon University, founded by the Government in 1920, the Burma Research Society[2] and the Burma Book Club—institutions founded by the British Government and University officials interested in Burmese history and literature, encouraged and led to the study of Burmese literature, including the drama, side by side with the English. And when adaptations in Burmese of a play by Molière and another by Tchekov appeared in 1928 in the magazine of the Book Club,[3] there were hopes that a new drama was in course of being developed. But the study has been from the beginning independent of, and unconnected with, the theatre of the professional actors, who are in great demand and still popular with the majority of the people. Therefore the interest in the drama, even though spread beyond the university walls, remains academic rather than practical. And as far as I can see, there are no signs of the coming in the near future of a new national drama.

[1] The magazine in which the translation appeared was the *Shwe Kyu Magazine*, and U Shwe Kyu was its founder and editor.

[2] The Text Publication Committee of the Research Society has published U Kyin U's *Daywagonban* and *Parpahein* with editorial notes, contributing much to our knowledge of the dramatist.

[3] The adaptations were from English translations of the two plays. English is the only medium of contact with the western drama for the Burmese, and, as in India, the influence of other European literatures can come only through English channels.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

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20. TOY CART.

of a savage description. Children have pretty manners; they are respectful to their elders without shyness or cringing.

Children grow up among the implements they will use in after life. Wooden mills for husking rice, tilt-hammers and mortars for pounding, cotton-seeders with geared rollers, spinning-wheels, weaving-looms and other simple machines are in every household; besides agricultural implements, carts and boats, all of which are made or kept in repair by the inmates (*cf.* p. 120). The workshops of artizans of every class are open to view, and the processes are obvious to every passer-by. The interest aroused in children is more diversified than in cold countries with their more secluded life. From mimicking the occupations of adults children learn to take part and soon begin to like a real share in them. Their trade begins with make-believe wares, then come scraps of house and garden produce till it develops into a source of pocket-money and training in business (Nos. 281, 431). The years of tutelage merge into the age of responsibility without abrupt transition. The intelligence which the school-teacher proceeds to build on has insensibly developed under conditions more than commonly favourable, which may help to account for the precocity of Burman school-children under good teaching.

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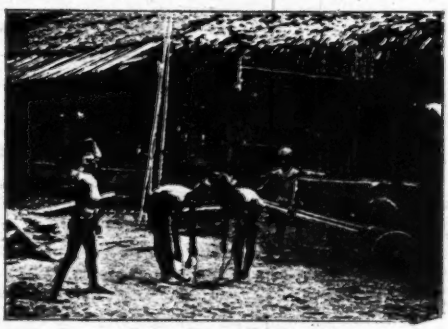
From the ages of eight to ten, boys begin attending the school of the Buddhist monastery (*kyaung*), where they are taught free by the recluse (*pôndyí*) or by his sojourner recluses (*upazin*). The spelling-book is chanted in a chorus led by a senior pupil, and is copied out with a white steatite pencil on a



21. PEG-TOPS (DYIN-PAUK).

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

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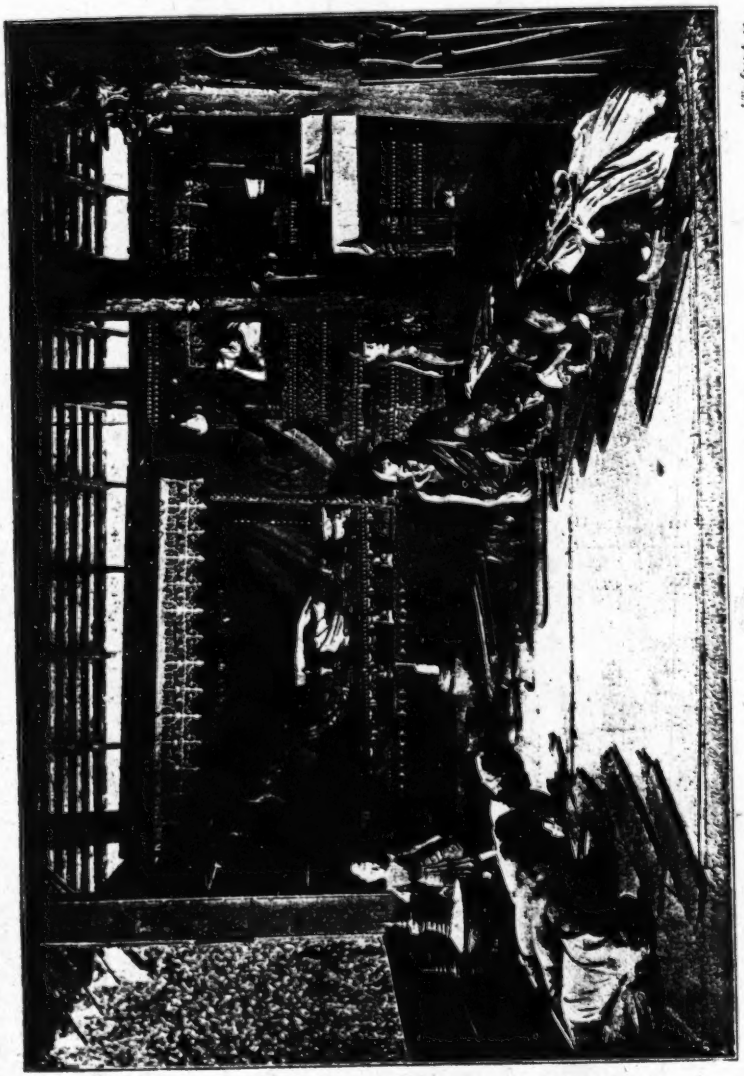

22. INTERIOR OF VILLAGE MONASTIC SCHOOL.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

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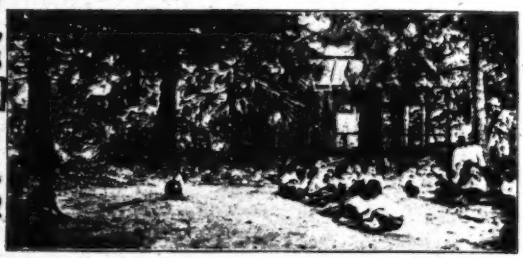

23. MARBLES (GON-HNYIN).

long wooden slate blackened with soot and rice-water (*thìmbôn*). The Burmese word-building is exceedingly regular and in the main phonetic (See appendix B). Reading is acquired in one term, without much effort on the part of pupil or teacher. The Burmans have a pure decimal notation in which the bugbears *eleven* and *twelve* are unrepresented. The Burmese *eleven* is literally "onety-one." Children can count up to hundreds before they come to school and can reckon up sums mentally. In arithmetic they are taught the multiplication-table and a few rules of thumb (*bedin*). In addition to the five Buddhist commandments (p. 16) and the objects of contemplation (p. 43), which the children learn in their homes, they chant passages from the Pâli scriptures in the school chorus and get other precepts by rote: such as the category of duties to parents, teachers and elders, *viz.*, reverence, support, mutual affection (*paráik*). They are taught the value of learning as an inalienable possession, together with many precepts from the *Lawkanîti* and *Mingala-thôt*; the conquests of the inner and outer worlds *Atwîn-aungdyîn*, *Apyîn-aungdyîn*, the story of the Buddha (see *The Light of Asia*) and the legendary cosmogony.

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As the result of this Buddhist system of schools, nearly half of the male and about 3 per cent. of the female population can read and write, as compared with 9 and 0·3 per cent. for men and women respectively in Bengal. The

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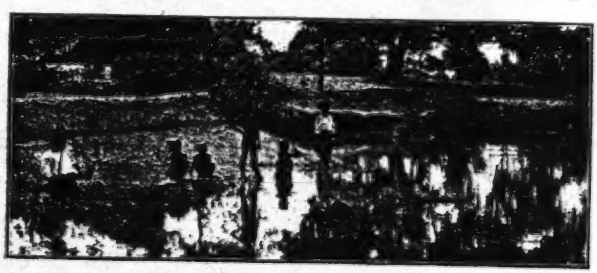

24. RACING TOY BOATS.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

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25. GAME OF SITOPPYIT.

Burman average stands midway between those of Ireland and Austria on the one hand, and Italy and Spain on the other. (Report of the Census of 1891.)

The boys at the monastery-school (*kyaung-tha*) do the domestic work—sweep the floors and enclosures, attend upon the recluses, and help in collecting the daily food. Some scholars live at the *kyaung*, others have the morning meal there, others again have their meals at home. The recluse exacts no deference from his scholar, but nevertheless receives from all lay persons a spontaneous homage identical with that accorded to royal personages. In the *kyaung* the lads acquire the good breeding of their country, for it is among the recluses that the élite of the race is to be sought. In the stage next to be described, the lad completes this training, by himself sharing in the deference paid to the yellow robe, which he assumes for a season as novice. The monastery-schools are open all the year, but have a large attendance only in the rainy season or *wā*.

871 Besides the monastic public schools there are private schools kept by laymen and occasionally also by women, in which girls as well as boys are taught. The subjects and methods are the same, but more time is given to arithmetic. The rules of thumb of the Indian *bedin* are being superseded by modern arithmetic, by help of the vernacular manual prepared by the missionary Stilson. A small fee is paid the lay teacher in money or in kind. Out of hours, the lay-school pupils are of use at their homes, minding their little brothers and sisters.

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The training begun in youth is never broken off. Study is a chief occupation of middle and advanced age. The teacher—*sayā*—clerical or lay, is reverenced,

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28. CYCLE RACE.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

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next to a parent, with a life-long devotion.

Before or after the monastic novitiate, it is the custom for the Burman lads to have themselves tattooed from the waist to the knee (No. 152). Not to submit to this ordeal is to incur the reproach of cowardice. The tattooing is an intricate pattern of animals and tracery. Owing to the extent of surface involved, the process is most painful. It occupies days or weeks, according to the fortitude of the subject, who is drugged with opium for the occasion. The instrument has a handle weighted at the butt, and a long point of bronze, split like a ruling-pen. It is worked with great rapidity. The pigment is a kind of lamp-black of the consistence of ink. It shows bluish black through the brown skin. When a Burman tucks up his loin-cloth, as he always does for work or exercise (*kadàung-chìnk*), he looks as if he had black knee-breeches. As plain as the contrast is to the eye, ordinary photographic plates fail to render it. In No. 153 it appears fully. On other parts of the body the men frequently have horoscopes and cabalistic diagrams tattooed with vermilion (*se-ní*, No. 162) for luck and bravado. The Shan practice of letting in gold and silver discs the size of two-penny pieces—beneath the skin—is sometimes imitated by Burmans as a charm against sword-cuts and bullets (*dàbyi*; *thenabbyi*). The Arakanese, who repudiate the custom of *thgwin*, ascribe it to a Burman King, who endeavoured to disguise his leprosy in this way.

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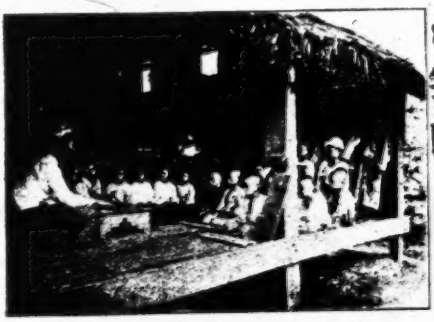
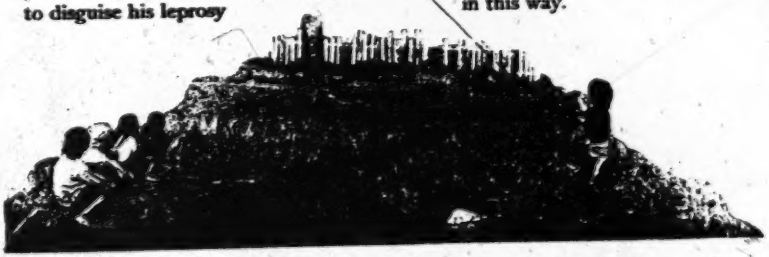


27. VILLAGE LAY SCHOOL.



28. KITE-FLYING.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

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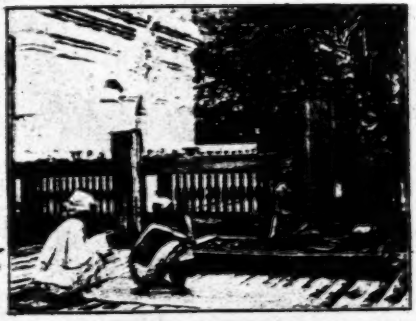

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37. SHINLAUNG RENEWING HIS PRAYER.

the world, but not from observation by the world. Great as is the homage accorded to him by the laity, a recluse who should disgrace his cloth—a thing almost unknown — would be promptly unfrocked by them.

For their sustenance the novices and regular recluses depend upon alms. They receive these in kind and according to daily need. Their appeal is mute. The morning after his reception the novice with his brethren will halt in front of his own parents' house and the houses of the neighbours to receive such dole of food as is offered (No. 29). He will not look to right or left, but keep his eyes rooted on the ground, making no sign beyond raising the cover of his alms-bowl. The recluse may not ask for anything whatever, nor even express a predilection. The food, ripe or ready-cooked, as the case may be, is doled indiscriminately into the *thabèit* from the east side, usually by a woman of the house. A woman should not stand in the shadow of a recluse, of a shrine, *zedi*, temple or image. She should not occupy an upper floor when a recluse happens to be beneath, nor enter a *Thein*, nor occupy a higher place with respect to men (p. 72). Food given in a religious spirit, as above described, is called *sun*. The recluses when collecting *sun* are generally followed by a couple of scholars bearing a yoke and basket to receive larger offerings on behalf of the monastery (No. 41).

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38. GOYIN MAKING OBEISANCE.

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Those probationers who remain in the monastery for several years—reckoned by Lents (*wa*)—and who aspire to full membership of the Assembly, read with the recluse Pâli texts of the Tripitaka, and the commentaries on these, and commit portions, sometimes whole books of the canon, to memory. Recluses of standing and also laymen take part in these exercises.

25; Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

39. PAINTING OF SHINLAUNG PETE.

The constituted daily routine of the monastery takes no account of recreation. In practice there is a wide margin of leisure. But the wearer of the yellow robe is not seen at play. Arithmetical puzzles are the nearest approach to a game. On the other hand the cheerfulness of the race suffers no restraint. There is decorum, without austerity or sanctimony. The severest penance laid upon the novice is temporary relegation to the secular state (*lein-byan*) for such faults as lying, theft, or killing anything. Cruelty to an animal is punished with caning.

The *yahán* exercise no exclusive function beyond that of admitting candidates to the novitiate and the full membership of their Assembly. The affairs of the Buddhist Church are initiated and conducted by the laity. The recluses merely add, by their presence, to the religious distinction of an occasion. At the shrine the recluse is like any other pilgrim; he never is a ministrant or priest. Neither is there any altar. The only material objects to which sanctity pertains are the relics of the Buddha. The members of the Assembly know no distinctions of men, racial or social. As regards the temporal power, of whatever origin, the recluse should be absolutely passive, neither contravening the laws nor invoking them when he suffers wrong. The recluse neither denounces nor harbours the criminal, a neutral attitude of which criminals are not slow to take advantage.

When admitted to full membership of the Assembly instituted by the Buddha (*Thingá*, Pāli *Sangha*), the novice becomes *Yahán* (*Yahándaw*, *Rahán*, *Arahan*), which signifies *perfected*, one advanced a stage

40. BOYS RECEIVING HIGHER INSTRUCTION

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

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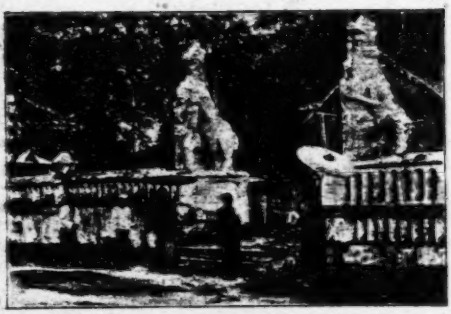

56. YAHAN PASSING THE STREETS.

whole country-side. The camp is laid out in the rice-fields after harvest, in the form of a square, with a pavilion in the middle for the *yahán* to meet and practise confession (*ábo-pyè*). There are a few *yahán* who do not settle in a *kyaung*, but wander from place to place, in the primitive way, the people providing them with temporary shelter.

The *yahán* make journeys to the seats of learning and the *kyaungs* of their former teachers, and make pilgrimages to shrines. A few travel as far as Ceylon and Buddha Gâya in Bahâr. On such journeys the *yahán* is accompanied by a scholar or attendant deputed by the *kyaungtagá* to carry provisions and money, which the *yahán* may not handle. When not collecting their *sun*, the *yahán* go abroad with attendants and carry umbrellas, or suffer such to be carried over them, and wear sandals. The *yahán* allow themselves to be driven in ox and buffalo carts; but do not drive or mount an animal or avail themselves of horse-draught. They travel by boat, steamer, and rail. Aged *yahán* are carried on a litter (*yin, waw*).

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The *kyaung*, primarily a shelter for the *yahán*, has, in virtue of his occupation, come to be a school. It is at first established on the outskirts of a settlement or at some distance away from it. Secular buildings are not erected within the shadow of a religious building. But the growth of towns brings the houses up to the precincts (*paráwún*) of the *kyaung*, which stands within a liberal enclosure, planted with fruit-trees. The *kyaung* as such has no particular style. The superposed roofs and decorated spires (*pyatthat*) of the votive *kyaung* are emblems of secular state, added to confer distinction.

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57. YAHAN ON HIS JOURNEY.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
1 Burmese AP4

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85. POTHUDAW.

been brought into a pseudo-connection with Buddhism by certain western neophytes of the Tibetan cult, are unheard of in Burma, which is the stronghold of primitive tradition.

Pôthudaw observe fewer *thîla* than *yathé*. They make their appeal with a gong of triangular shape (*kyìzi*, Nos. 22, 86), which spins on the string it hangs by, and emits a high and sustained throbbing note. *Pôthudaw* eat in the forenoon only. They accept alms in money and in kind, for which they carry baskets with a shoulder-yoke. They wear a white robe, shave the head, and pluck out the beard. *Pôthudaw* shift for themselves in *zayát*s about the temples and seldom remain long in one place.

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Mèthilá are female celibates who observe a rule parallel to that of the *Pôthudaw*. They shave the head. Their robe is like that of the other celibates with the addition of a jacket. The cloth is dyed a faint red. Both they and the *pôthudaw* are generally individuals who have lost their family ties. In some places *kyaungs* are provided for *mèthilá*, where they keep schools for girls. A few are possessed of learning. *Mèthilá* are about as numerous as *pôthudaw*, and both together are about one-tenth to one-twentieth as numerous as *yahán*, and several times more so than *yathé*. There is no class of female recluses answering to *yahán*.

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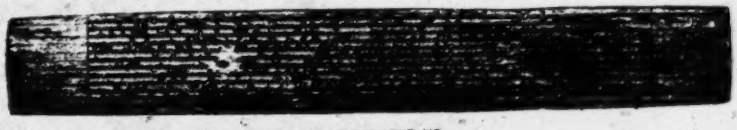
Payadyín form colonies in the vicinities of the principal shrines and of the cemeteries of large towns. They are the descendants of temple slaves, the condition to which captives in war were reduced both by the Burman and the Taláing races during their incessant

86. MÈTHILÁ AT WORSHIP.

25: Ferrars E-5 (ca. 1890) 1901 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

212 still is used by the Shans for their sacred MSS. The Burmans use the paper chiefly in the form of stiff tablets (*parabèik*), blackened, like the *thimbôn*, for writing on with a steatite pencil. Burmese type was cut (No. 452) and the first 213 printing-plant set up in Burma by the American Baptist Mission. At present

538 177 [212] 214



274. PALM-LEAF MS.

●871 there are a number of printing establishments owned by Burmans, from which 198 quite a literature of their religious works has issued. At first the Buddhists of Burma considered print not good enough for the scripture canon. Modernised 203 legends of the Buddha in his previous incarnations (*zat*) are beginning to form the foundation of a romance-literature of indigenous type. Newspapers have not yet taken a firm hold, even in the large towns; but news travels very fast in the ordinary way, especially news about the prices of goods. This western art has not contributed to the spread of western knowledge in the way that might be expected. The Yaw Mindyi, a minister of the late King Mindôn Min, made a most praiseworthy effort to popularise western ideas in a series of MS. treatises. A native undertaking upon a grand scale—nothing less than a Burmese encyclopædia—was on foot in the sixties, but fell through for want of organised support. In Japan, an analogous enterprise was successful. What applies to concerted action in matters like the above, applies equally to political combination. Few Burmans, even after years of schooling, learn enough to read an English newspaper with [212] profit. To this day there is no Burmese manual for the study of English. The scholars learn only enough of the language to procure them employment as accountants and copyists. Similarly, there are few English who can understand a Burmese newspaper.

275. COPYIST AT WORK.

000 Dealers, with the exception of the

29: Slater M-4 (no date) 1951 AP1 Burma
Burmese AP4

invariably in the same posture, seated, with one arm across his lap. The whole atmosphere is one of ordered, unhurried peace, whether within the timbered buildings, or within the surrounding compound.

But the monastery is seldom far away from the village, and this is of set purpose. The Buddhist *Saṃgha* in Burma might well be described as a teaching Order. "Of all charities, charity of learning is the noblest," observes a Buddhist layman,[27] and the monastery dispenses this charity freely. It provides the village school. There the boys learn to read and write. There, moreover, they are tutored in Buddhist lore, with a firm emphasis on ethical requirements. They learn the 'three Jewels' which enjoin reverence for the Buddha, the Law *(Dhamma)*, and the Order, and the five precepts — not to kill, not to steal, not to lie, not to commit adultery, not to drink intoxicants. In the *Mingalā Thot* or "Song of Great Blessing," which they recite by heart[28], they learn that a wise and good man will seek to store up merit by fulfilling his domestic duties, by giving ample alms, by seeking 'self-knowledge' and by learning from holy men 'as chance affords.' The monastic ideal of utter renunciation, 'from all attachment free', is also indicated and 'Nirvana here' is said to be 'true happiness' leading to the Highest Bliss.[29] They will also learn stories of the Buddha's previous birth from the *Jātakas*, and, above all, the story of the historic Buddha.

But attendance at the day school is not their only initiation in the faith. Every Burman boy, at the age of puberty or earlier, is expected to leave home and become a boarder at the monastery for a period which may vary from weeks to years. "A Buddhist who has not been a *koyin* (novice) or donned the yellow robe," remarks a Burmese writer, "is looked upon as one who has missed the most essential (part) of his experience in this world." The village school often appears to be a merry jumble to the outsider, but during this time as a novice "each boy gets individual attention.... There is a wholesome atmosphere of intimacy and understanding between the teacher and the taught." Most of the novices return to secular life, but some remain to become fully ordained monks.[30]

The *shin-byu* ceremony, or rite of confirmation, which is another essential in the Burmese boy's initiation, generally precedes his entry to

[27] U Set, "Life in a *Phongyi Kyaung*," *Rangoon Times*, (May 13, 1931).

[28] See Appendix for fuller account of this Song and other Monastic instruction.

[29] "To understand the literature, 'serious' or popular, of Burma we cannot know the Pali Jātaka too well," M. H. Bode, *The Pali Literature of Burma*, chap. v, pp. 81, 82.

[30] U Set, *op. cit.*; cf. Scott, *The Burman*, Vol. I, chaps. II, III, and IV.

29: Slater M-4 (no date) 1951 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

the monastery. It is a day of excited celebration. Recalling the Great Renunciation, when Gautama left the royal court in his quest for truth, the boy, attired in princely robes, is feasted by his family and friends until the moment when he casts his finery aside to don the yellow robe of the Order.[21]

Girls experience a similar ceremonial initiation, when (to the accompaniment of vigorous music) their ears are pierced to take the ear-rings which are the sign of womanhood. They cannot attend the monastic schools with the boys, but other means are found for their education, and they certainly do not lag behind their brothers in intelligence, character or Buddhist zeal. Mrs Hla Oung recounts the story of a little maid taken to the monastery to be reminded of the five precepts, after some childish misdemeanour. (The monk was benign. "There was the faintest suspicion of a smile on his calm face, to show, I suppose, that her backsliding was not to be taken as a defection from the faith.") The 'charity of learning' seems, then, to be shared by girls as well as boys. The status, freedom and privileges of Burmese women have already been remarked and Mrs Hla Oung affirms vigorously that "the life of the Burmese woman is bound up in her religion. Buddhism has formed the character of the Burmese woman.... There are few Burmese women, even in the villages, who are unable to read and write," and the Buddhist scriptures form the ground work of their studies.[22]

Not only are the monks numerous, but they are dispersed throughout the country. Every village has at least one monastery, and sometimes more. The educational influence of the Order has been, therefore, both organised and ubiquitous. In more recent times this influence has been challenged by new conditions. Government and mission schools have intervened, and the modern Burmese boy may only remain in the monastery as a novice for a brief, token period. But during the centuries which shaped the Burmese character and outlook, the monks as educators had no serious rivals.

Nor has their ministry to the community been confined to education. Herbs and potions from the monastery are held in high esteem, especially in Upper Burma.[23] The monastery also serves as alms-house and asylum.

[21] For a good description of this ceremony v. Ananda Metteya, quoted by G. Appleton, *Buddhism in Burma*, pp. 22–23.

[22] Ma M. Hla Oung, "The Women of Burma," *Buddhism*, Vol. I, No. 1, p. 61 (September, 1903, Rangoon); cf. a later series by Daw Mya Sein, "Kin Sein Hla," *Burma Today*, published by the Burma Government in India, 1944, in which the influence of the Monastery is not so strongly emphasised.

[23] "Theirs is faith cure rather than medicine," writes a Burmese correspondent, who cites cures from snake-bite, leprosy and hydrophobia.

29: Slater M-4 (no date) 1951 APl Burma
Burmese AP4

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practice of meditation, learning and love. Therefore because he forgot the law of truth, his glory and dominion waned; his queen broke faith with him, and took her pleasure with the Naga king, by whom she conceived." Her sons were born blind because "the breath of the Nagas had come upon them."[3]

The king soon died, and his successors only survived for brief periods. The Naga king from the spirit world is held responsible for their death. 'Twisting his way into the hollow of the palace post, the Naga prince came to the world of men and reigned seven years with the queen.'

A youth 'from a Brahmin village' resolved to end this state of affairs and seize the kingdom. He prepared himself by religious observance. 'He bathed his body and cleansed it; bowed down and did obeissance, worshipping the Three Gems, his great grandparents, grandfather, grandmother, mother and father, the spirits who keep watch over the great religion, the spirits who keep watch over cities and border villages....'

On his way to the capital, halting at a village 'where of old the coming Buddhas sported and made merry,' the youth is encouraged by the god, Sakra, who 'with his fairy horse and fairy raiment went ahead with the prince in human guise.' Thus assisted, the youth invades the royal town, takes possession and is married to the Queen. Warned by Sakra to be watchful, the youth questions the Queen about the deaths of the previous kings. The Queen then confesses her intrigues with the Naga prince and helps him in a plot to seize the Naga, who is slain by the youthful and zealous conqueror.

NOTE B

BUDDHIST RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN BURMA

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The chief lessons taught in the monastic schools in Burma are the following:

I. *The Three Jewels:*

I take refuge in the Buddha,
I take refuge in the Dhamma
I take refuge in the Sangha.

II. *The Five Precepts:*

Not to kill
Not to steal
Not to lie
Not to commit adultery
Not to drink strong drink.

[3] Nagas are "fabulous creatures that sleep deep down below:" cf. Scott, *The Burmese*, Vol. I, chap. XXIX, p. 353.

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III. *The Mingalè Thot:* The Song of Great Blessing. *(Mahāmaṅgala Sutta: Sutta Nipāta* II. 4).

"Thus have I heard:
Once when the Blessed One was at Jetavana in Anathapindika's Park, as night came on, a beautiful *Nat*[1] drew near, lighting up the whole place with his presence. He greeted the Blessed One, and then standing on one side addressed him in this verse:

"What many men and deities
Desiring Bliss, have sought to find – –
Come tell me, Master, what it is
That brings most blessing to mankind."

To whom the Sage made answer:

"To quit the fools, to court the wise,
This is the highest Paradise:

"To pay respect where it is due,
So shall true blessing wait on you:

"Seek a fit place and there remain,
And strive self-knowledge to attain:

"If in past lives you've stored up merit
The fruits thereof you'll now inherit:

"Let wisdom skill and discipline
And gracious kindly words be thine:

"Tend parents, cherish wife and child,
Pursue a blameless life and mild.

"Live thou devout, give ample alms,
Protect thy kin from life's alarms;

"Do good, shun ill and ever shrink
From snare of spirituous drink:

"So do thou persevere in good.
This is the true Beatitude:

"Be humble, with thy lot content,
Grateful and ever reverent.

[1] I have here used the Burmese term, *Nat* instead of *deva*. Fausböll translates "deity" in S.B.E., Vol. X (Sutta Nipāta) p. 42.

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"Study the law of righteousness,
This is the path that leads to Bliss.

"Patience, kind speech, as chance affords,
With holy men, religious words:

"The noble truths, austerity,
Nirvana here, and chastity.
This is true happiness.

"To live from all attachment free,
From sorrow and impurity,
This is the true security,
This is the Highest Bliss."

"The Mingala-thoht," says Sir George Scott, "is one of the first books the young scholar gets into his hands after he has learnt the ordinary ormulae of worship. There are few Burmans ... who cannot repeat the Pali text from end to end."[2]

"Side by side with the Pali, they learn the Burmese text."[3] A Burmese version quoted by Father Sangermano begins each verse, "O Nat!" e.g., "O Nat! know that to keep far from the company of the ignorant," etc.[4]

The version given above is quoted from the Appendix to *Modern Buddhism in Burma* (Purser and Saunders), pp. 95, 96. The metric form recalls the sing-song repetition of the young *koyins* as they commit the Song to memory.

See also F L Woodward's translation in *Some Sayings of the Buddha*, Oxford University Press, ("The World's Classics") which brings out the refrain to each verse (not given above): "Theirs is the greatest blessing."

Bishop Bigandet added the following footnote to his version: "Within a narrow compass, Buddha has condensed an abridgment of almost all moral virtues."[5]

III

SONG OF EIGHT VICTORIES

Stories and songs in honour of the Buddha also form part of Monastic education for the laity, especially this medieval poem, probably composed in Siam. Scenes from the poem are depicted on pagoda platforms.

[2] *The Burman*, Vol. II, p. 318.
[3] M.B.B., p. 12.
[4] *The Burmese Empire*, chap. XIV, p. 130.
[5] *Op. cit.* Vol. I, p. 123.

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The first stanza refers to the legend of Māra, King of Death and Lord of Hell, who is said to have opposed Gautama's passage to Nibbāna.

"By liberality did he
The Sage attain to victory,
Such was his chosen armoury!
Māra, by all his host attended,
With thousand flashing swords defended,
On his war-elephant so proudly seated,
In panoply of steel the Sage defeated.
Be yours his glorious victory
And yours its ample blessing be!"

The second stanza celebrates an encounter with a demon who used to devour children:

"By patience and tranquility
(Such was his chosen panoply)
The Sage achieved the victory.
Alavaka, the demon dread,
The livelong night he combated,
With heart of brass redoubtable,
Fiercer than Māra, lord of hell.
Be yours his glorious victory
And yours its ample blessing be."

The third stanza refers to the last of the murderous attempts of Devadutta, the cousin and would-be supplanter of the Buddha. It is told that the Buddha's compassion had such an effect on the elephant Nalagiri that the brute fell before him and removed the dust from the Buddha's feet.

"By the waters of his pity
He won the glorious victory
O'er Elephant Nalagiri!
As the dreadful thunder crashing,
As the lurid lightning flashing,
As the jungle-fire encroaching,
He beheld the brute approaching.
Be yours his glorious victory
And yours its ample blessing be!"

The fourth stanza relates an encounter with a robber; the fifth concerns a victory over slander as to Gautama's chastity; the sixth recounts his triumph over a false teacher; and the seventh points a moral by describing the victory attained by Moggallāna, one of Gautama's chief followers:

"His pupil too by magic might
Did aid him in the heroic fight...."

The eighth stanza refers to the Arahat's power to assume other forms and pass through the air unseen.

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The poem therefore emphasises three lessons:

1. The honor due to the Buddha.
2. The blessing brought by the Buddha.
3. A challenge to the pupil to follow the Buddha's moral example.

The stanzas here quoted are from the version given by Purser and Saunders, M.B.B., pp. 99ff.

V.

THE NEMI ZAT

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Zat is the Burmese for Jātaka (Buddhist Birth Story). Of these the Nemi, Temi, Zeneka and Wethandaya Zats are especially popular, and form part of the Burmese child's education.

Reference has already been made in the text to the Wethanday Zat (Story of Prince Wessantara) which commends a prince who was willing to give away a kingdom, chariot, children and even his wife in his zeal for his own salvation.

The following is an extract from the Burmese version of the Nemi Zat given by Bishop Bigandet. As will be seen, it sets out the pains of hell and the blessings of heaven. The Burmese are not the only people who have considered such stories suitable to encourage young children in the right path!

The Buddha explains how he was, in a former existence, the ruler of the country of Mitila. As such, from a tender age he "displayed the most liberal and pious dispositions in making abundant alms and fervently observing all the religious practices. All the inhabitants of that kingdom followed his example.... During those happy times, hell seemed to have become quite unnecessary...

"On a certain day Nemi appeared to be most anxious to know which was the most excellent practice, the bestowing of alms, or the observance of the precepts." The King of the *Nat* realm himself came down from his glorious seat to give the answer, and, on his return, he eulogised King Nemi so strongly that the other *Nats* wished to see this virtuous prince. Accordingly a young *Nat*, named Matali, was commanded to escort the king to the *Nat* realm.

Stepping into the carriage sent for him, the king "abandoned himself to the guidance of his heavenly guide."

"Two roads are now opened before us," said Matali, "the one through the dismal dungeons, where the wicked are consigned to undergo punishment for their offences, and the other through the blissful seats, where the good are enjoying the rewards allotted to them for their virtues. Which of the two do you wish to follow?"

The prince said he wished to visit both places.

Matali answered in a mild tone of voice that his request should be complied with.